

Amendment B to CB 120777 - SFD Dangerous Buildings

Sponsor: Councilmember Morales

Making a finding related to illegal activities in vacant buildings

Effect: This amendment would add a finding related to illegal activities in vacant buildings.

Amend Section 1 to CB 120777 as follows:

Section 1. The City finds and declares:

A. The Seattle Fire Department is tracking over 100 buildings in the city that are vacant, and either derelict, unsafe, or a public nuisance.

* * *

D. These buildings represent a safety risk to the communities they are located in and the general public because they create opportunities for unauthorized trespass or occupancy, which may enable illegal or unsafe behavior and create additional fire risks. Unauthorized access to these buildings and the potential for drug use or other illegal behavior inside them may lead to further structural damage, decrease community safety, and endanger first responders.

~~(D)~~E. Vacant buildings pose additional risks to firefighters beyond those that are inherent in fire suppression and extinguishment, for instance because these buildings tend to be in disrepair and can be missing features such as staircases and portions of floors; and fires in vacant buildings are also more likely to involve the entire building and to spread beyond the building of fire origin.

~~(E)~~F. A number of the buildings monitored by the City have experienced fires that required fire department emergency suppression responses. One of them has had 18 calls to 911 for fire-related incidents in the last 12 months.

~~(F)~~G. On February 26, 2023, March 27, 2023, and July 24, 2023, three people died in fires in these buildings.

~~(G)~~H. In January 2024, another vacant building was slated for demolition but then had a significant fire that required nearly 100 firefighters for fire ground operations, shut down a major arterial for weeks, displaced residents in a neighboring building, and disrupted businesses in the area.

~~(H)~~I. Fires in vacant buildings have increased dramatically in recent years, indicating an escalating emergency requiring the city government's action. Incident officers reported 77 fires related to vacant buildings in 2021, 91 in 2022, and 130 in 2023.

~~(I)~~J. The safety of Seattle firefighters and police officers is put at significant risk when responding to fire, medical, or criminal emergencies in these derelict and unsafe buildings, especially if trespassers are inside and require rescue.

~~(J)~~K. As the incident in January 2024 demonstrated, these fires can increase in scale and create lengthy and ongoing threats to the public peace, health, and safety. This ordinance is necessary to take effect immediately to prevent more such threats.